

## Message Text

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12

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CU-05 PA-04 PRS-01 CIAE-00 INR-11

NSAE-00 RSC-01 DRC-01 /042 W  
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R 250945Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9494

INFO USIA WASHDC

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STATE FOR AF/C, USIA FOR IAA

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SCUL

SUBJ: "ZAIRE 74" FESTIVAL

1. HIGHLY TOUTED "ZAIRE 74" FESTIVAL OF AMERICAN AND ZAIRIAN ENTERTAINERS, DESPITE EXCELLENT TURN-OUT AND ENTHUSIASM ON THIRD AND FINAL NIGHT OF PERFORMANCES, GENERALLY FAILED TO MEET EXPECTATIONS.

2. ONLY AN ESTIMATED 8,000 PEOPLE ATTENDED THE FIRST NIGHTS SHOW AND LESS THAN HALF THAT MANY WERE PRESENT AT THE SECOND NIGHT'S PROGRAM IN A STADIUM WHOSE CAPACITY, WITH SEATS ON THE FIELD, IS OVER 70,000.

3. LETHARGIC CROWDS FAILED TO COME ALIVE EITHER OF THE FIRST TWO NIGHTS, THOUGH MOST PERFORMANCES AND TECHNICAL STAGING WERE EXCELLENT.

4. IT IS DIFFICULT TO ASCERTAIN WHERE THE FAULT LIES, AS THE PROMOTERS BLAME THE ORGANIZERS, WHO BLAME THE PROMOTERS, AND BOTH BLAME THE ZAIRIAN GOVT. (PROMOTERS APPARENTLY BELIEVE THAT GOZ WILL REIMBURSE THEM FOR LOSSES ON GATE RECEIPTS, WHICH WERE SUPPOSED TO BE SPLIT 50-50). ZAIRIAN REP BLAMES BOTH THE PROMOTERS AND ORGANIZERS. (HE TOLD USIS OFFICER, "I HAVE NEVER, IN MY LIFE,

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HAD SUCH DIFFICULT PEOPLE TO DEAL WITH.")

5. IN ANY EVENT, PUBLICITY AND PROMOTION WERE LACKING AND TICKETS DID NOT GO ON SALE UNTIL THE DAY OF THE PERFORMANCE "AT VARIOUS LOCATIONS THROUGHOUT KINSHASA," THOUGH NO ONE WAS EVER ABLE TO ADEQUATELY PIN DOWN THE ALLEGED LOCATIONS. SAID THE ORGANIZERS, "THE TICKET SITUATION HAS BEEN TAKEN COMPLETELY OUT OF OUR HANDS," THOUGH THERE WAS NEVER ANY INDICATION INTO WHOSE HANDS THE TICKET SITUATION HAD BEEN PUT.

6. TO ADD TO THE CONFUSION, TICKETS WERE OVERPRICED, RUNNING FROM 12 ZAIRE (24 DOLLARS) DOWN TO ZAIRE 1.50 (ABOUT THREE DOLLARS) FOR STANDING ROOM; LEAST EXPENSIVE SEAT WAS THREE ZAIRE.

7. PROGRAM, SCHEDULED TO BEGIN AT 7:00 PM EACH NIGHT, DID NOT START BEFORE 9:00 PM AND CONSEQUENTLY CONTINUED UNTIL EARLY HOURS OF MORNING; JAMES BROWN DID NOT BEGIN HIS ACT UNTIL 3:00 AM. FIRST NIGHT AND BB KING DID NOT GO ON UNTIL ALMOST 2:00 AM SUNDAY NIGHT. MOST OF THE SPARSE CROWD LEFT AFTER MIRIAM MAKEBA, WHO PRECEDED BB KING. ETTA JAMES, DUE TO CLOSE THE THIRD NIGHT'S SHOW SIMPLY DID NOT APPEAR AT ALL, APPARENTLY DUE TO THE LATE HOUR.

8. ORGANIZERS HAD BEEN LED TO BELIEVE THAT PRES MOBUTU HAD INSTRUCTED CROWDS TO TURN OUT FOR SECOND SHOW, AND, IN AFTERNOON, ORGANIZERS EXPECTED PEOPLE TO BE "HANGING FROM THE RAFTERS." IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION OF WHY THEY SIMPLY DID NOT LET EVERYONE IN FREE, EXECUTIVE COORDINATOR COMMENTED THAT THIS WAS "STILL A COMMERCIAL, PROFIT-MAKING VENTURE."

9. PRES MOBUTU DID, APPARENTLY, BUY OUT THE STADIUM THIRD EVENING, AS STADIUM WAS APPROXIMATELY TWO THIRDS FILLED AND RAPPORT, COMPARED TO THE OTHER TWO LETHARGIC EVENINGS, WAS MUCH BETTER BETWEEN PERFORMERS AND AUDIENCE. PEOPLE ADMITTED FREE TO STADIUM SEATS AND SEATS ON FIELD WERE REDUCED TO 5 ZAIRE.

10. PERFORMERS GENERALLY OBVIOUSLY UNHAPPY AFTER WHAT MUST HAVE BEEN BIG BUILDUP IN STATES. AMERICAN JOURNALISTS PRESENT -- MERCIFULLY FEW SINCE MOST HAD ALREADY LEFT AFTER FIGHT POSTPONEMENT -- WERE CRITICAL OF OPERATIONS AND WASHINGTON POST CORRESPONDENT DAVID OTTAWAY TOLD USIS OFFICER THAT HIS ARTICLE WOULD BE CRITICAL OF BOTH PROMOTION OF FESTIVAL AND EVIDENT LACK OF GOZ ABILITY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO BRING THIS PROJECT TO SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION. OTTAWAY PARTICULARLY STRUCK BY "BLACK EXPLOITATION" THEME WHICH, IN HIS OPINION DOMINATED ENTIRE PLAN. (WOULD APPRECIATE AGENCY MONITORING WASHINGTON POST NEXT SEVERAL DAYS IN CASE OTTAWAY ARTICLE DOES APPEAR.)

11. COMMENT: PROMOTERS HAVE THROUGHOUT EXPECTED TOMAKE THEIR MONEY FROM PLANNED FEATURE FILM. CAMERAMEN HAVE BEEN SHOOTING EVERY-

THING THAT MOVES IN KINSHASA FOR SEVERAL WEEKS, AND OFTEN SHOT, DURING PERFORMANCES, FROM DISTANCES OF LESS THAN THREE FEET FROM ENTERTAINERS, DOING LITTLE IF ANYTHING TO ENHANCE THE AESTHETIC QUALITIES OF THE SHOW. POSSIBILITIES OF SUCCESSFUL FILM, DESPITE GENERAL FAILURE OF CROSS-CULTURAL EXCHANGE ASPECT, SHOULD NOT BE

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UNDER-ESTIMATED; THE NAMES WERE THERE, THE PLACE, THE "ANGLE" TOO.

12. NOT TO BE UNDERESTIMATED IN THE ANALYSIS OF THE LACK OF SUCCESS WAS THE APPARENT MISMATCH BETWEEN AMERICAN ENTERTAINERS AND AFRICAN AUDIENCES. PROMOTERS NAIVELY BELIEVED THAT ANY AMERICAN BLACK ENTERTAINER WOULD HAVE AUTOMATIC RAPPORT WITH AFRICAN AUDIENCE; THIS WAS NOT TO BE. BILL WITHERS, FOR EXAMPLE, OBVIOUSLY AWARE THAT HE WAS GETTING NOWHERE, STOPPED IN THE MIDDLE OF A NUMBER HALFWAY THROUGH THE PROGRAM, GOT UP, PICKED UP HIS GUITAR, SAID "GOOD NIGHT AND THANK YOU," AND WALKED OFF THE STAGE. EVEN THE PERFORMANCE OF MIRIAM MAKEBA, PREVIOUSLY A GREAT CROWD-PLEASER HERE, BARELY ROUSED THE DROWSY AUDIENCE.

13. ZAIRIAN GROUPS WHICH COMBINED LOCAL BEAT WITH JAMES BROWN-STYLE SHOW WERE GENERALLY MORE POPULAR WITH AUDIENCE THAN AMERICAN GROUPS. IN FACT, TWO GROUPS WHO SEEMED TO ACHIEVE THE LEAST RAPPORT WITH THE CROWD WERE THE TRADITIONAL NATIVE ZAIRIAN DANCERS (THE CROWD SEEMED ALMOST EMBARRASSED BY THEM) AND THE POINTER SISTERS, INCREASINGLY POPULAR IN AMERICA, WHOSE BRAND OF FABRICATED MADISON AVENUE MUSIC NEVER GOT OFF THE GROUND HERE.

14. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THE LOGISTICS OF SUCH AN EVENT PROPOSED DIFFICULT IF NOT OVERWHELMING PROBLEMS; THE TRANSPORTATION OF EQUIPMENT AND OVER 250 PEOPLE TO ZAIRE AT ONE TIME, THE CONSTRUCTION OF A PROFESSIONAL STAGE AND LIGHTING SETUP, AND DEALING WITH GOZ AUTHORITIES WHO WERE GENERALLY PREOCCUPIED WITH THE FIGHT AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DID NOT REALLY FOCUS ON THE FESTIVAL UNTIL ALMOST SHOW-TIME WERE NOT EASY TASKS. (THE FESTIVAL ORGANIZERS' LONG DISTANCE PHONE BILL OF SOME DOLLARS EIGHT THOUSAND TESTIFIES TO THE COMPLEXITIES INVOLVED IN PROGRAMMING PERFORMERS FROM VARIOUS PARTS OF US ON SHORT NOTICE.)

15. ORGANIZAERS DID THEIR BEST, BUT APPARENTLY HAD NOT HAD MUCH EXPERIENCE IN THIS SORT OF TASK. AS THE PUBLICITY DIRECTOR FOR THE FESTIVAL SAID "WHAT DO YOU EXPECT WHEN YOU HAVE AS PROMOTERS AND ORGANIZERS AN EX-TRUMPET PLAYER (HUGH MASEKELA), AN EX-ENTERTAINER (LLOYD PRICE), AND AN I-DON'T-KNOW-WHAT (APPARENTLY REFERRING TO EXECUTIVE COORDINATOR ALAN PARISER, WHO PROBABLY WORKED AT LEAST 18 HOURS PER DAY FOR OVER THREE WEEKS)?" ARRIVAL OF LIBERIAN MONEY-MEN IN MIDDLE OF LAST WEEK ABRUPTLY RELEGATED ORGANIZERS TO PLAYING SECOND FIDDLE AND TENSION WAS EVIDENT BETWEEN ORGANIZERS AND PROMOTERS, WHO HAD BEEN LED TO BELIEVE THAT EVERYTHING WAS FINE AND THERE WAS NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.

16. FORTUNATELY, INABILITY OF ORGANIZERS TO BE READY FOR ANTICIPATED FRIDAY EVENING OPENING ENABLED AMBASSADOR TO HOLD RECEPTION IN HONOR OF AMERICAN PARTICIPANTS TO FESTIVAL WHICH, SAID ONE JOURNALIST, "WAS THE BEST THING ABOUT THE FESTIVAL." BESIDES A MAJORITY OF THE PARTICIPANTS THEMSELVES, INCLUDING MIRIAM MAKEBA, ALSO PRESENT AT THE AMBASSADOR'S RECEPTION WERE THE WIFE AND PARENTS OF MUHAMMAD ALI, ALI'S TRAINER, ANGELO DUNDEE, AND VISITING AMERICAN JOURNALISTS, AMONG THEM BUDD SCHULBERG AND GEORGE PLIMPTON.  
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